

REMARKS

Claims 12-25 remain pending. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 12-23 were rejected under 35USC102(b) as anticipated by Schwartz et al (USPN 5,769,899). The cited reference appears to show a cartilage repair "unit" that includes a relatively wide head section and a relatively thin stem section that is situated thereunder, wherein the ribs 38 referred to by the Examiner are disposed about the thin stem section. As such, the ribs cannot possibly engage the ribs of adjacent repair units in order to form an interlocking assembly due to interference between the respective head sections. Independent claim 12 has been amended slightly to emphasize that the ridges of the claimed device are to be formed about the **outermost** periphery of the cartilage plug. As was pointed out in the disclosure at for example page 14, lines 7-10 and page 25, lines 4-7, the peripheral location of the ridges allows the plugs to interlock with surrounding cartilage, bone **and/or one another**. This is especially useful for applications in mosaicplasty as the technique is described at page 26, lines 17ff. The absence of any ribbing on the outermost periphery of the Schwartz device clearly precludes anticipation. Moreover, in view of fact that the cited reference fails to even recognize the advantage of being able to **axially** lock a plug to natural tissue **as well as** to adjacent plugs, it is respectfully submitted that a structure that achieves such capability can not reasonably be considered obvious thereover.

Claims 24 and 25 were amended in independent form incorporating the limitations of the underlying independent claim 12. Although neither a rejection nor allowance of such claims was included in the Office Action, it is respectfully submitted that limitations claimed therein are not in any way suggested by the cited reference.

In light of the above amendments and remarks, applicants earnestly believe the application to now be in condition for allowance and respectfully request that it be passed to issue.

Please charge additional fees to our Deposit Account No. 21-0800.

Respectfully submitted,

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